

Bishops objected to the study of the Bible by the common people. While Brute and his friends were beginning to realise the full horror of the Mediaeval Church system, their imaginations on the subject were easily inflamed by the mysterious and powerful language of the book in which, as they believed, they could find all truth. Brute proved to his own satisfaction that the Pope had the number of the Beast.<sup>1</sup> He regarded the Papacy as the centre whence most evils emanated. The sale of pardons he traced chiefly to this source; the encouragement of war to serve the interests of Rome shocked him scarcely less. Like Swynderby, he was accused of denying the Real Presence, and like Swynderby he explained his actual heresy to be that of Consubstantia-tion. He was fully alive to the dangers of priestcraft in all its aspects, including auricular confession and the prevailing doctrine of absolution. After many escapes, he was captured in 1393, brought before Bishop Trevenant at Hereford, and forced to read a submission. But the words were so general that they scarcely amounted to a recantation and might mean one thing to the judges and another to the prisoner.<sup>2</sup>

Lollardry continued to flourish in those parts, though Nicolas Hereford deserted his friends and accepted preferment in the Church. The spread of heresy in the West was not confined to the dioceses of Hereford and Worcester. There were Lollards in Reading and Salisbury, and the Bishop of that diocese, whose spiritual rule extended over all Berkshire and Wiltshire, had to deal with the most daring phase of the revolt. It was here that the Poor Priests first made the audacious experiment of creating their own successors. Pious Catholics were scandalised to learn that hedge-priests, ordained by their equals, were celebrating masses and administering the Sacraments. It does not seem that this form of rebellion against Episcopacy went very far, for most of the Lollard priests in the next generation had been regularly ordained by

<sup>1</sup> The Pope is «Dux Clerl.» D = 500; V = 5;  
X^10; C = 100; H = 50j  
B, K = 0; 1 = 1. ∴ Dux Cleri = 666.  
<sup>2</sup> Foxe, iii. 131-87, 196-7; *Rot. Pat.*, 17 B. H. m. 27 d.